



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Aug. 22, 2012**

By: Sgt. Michelle Brown, 134th Public Affairs Detachment

## **Alaska National Guard Soldier of the Year meets the Secretary of Army**

**FIVE HILLS TRAINING AREA, Mongolia** – One Soldier with the Alaska Army National Guard knew that he was headed for the adventure of a lifetime when he traveled from Anchorage, Alaska, to Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, to participate in Khaan Quest 12 (KQ12), but he never expected to have the opportunity to meet the Secretary of Army, John M. McHugh, during his mission Aug. 15.

Spc. Joseph P. Kelly II, 1-297th Reconnaissance and Surveillance Squadron medic, was one of four Soldiers with the Alaska National Guard who were chosen to meet McHugh during his visit to various Khaan Quest 2012 exercise locations.

"Participating in Khaan Quest is a terrific way to demonstrate the Army's increasing role in the Pacific," McHugh said.

Khaan Quest is a regularly scheduled multinational exercise sponsored by U.S. Army Pacific and hosted annually by the Mongolia Armed Forces. The exercise is held at the Mongolian Armed Forces Peace Support Center in the vicinity of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, Aug. 11 -23, 2012.

Kelly is participating in KQ12 as trainer for a medical first responder course that will enhance the ability of 25 Mongolian Armed Forces soldiers to perform immediate life-saving first aid.

"The course participants are all motivated and that's the coolest thing about it; they really get into the training and are picking up the content very fast," Kelly said.

Kelly competed in the Alaska National Guard 2012 Best Warrior Competition held in March 2012 and won Soldier of the Year. He earned the Army Commendation Medal for his effort and dedication.

"He destroyed the competition," said Lt. Col. Joel Gilbert, 1-297th R&S Squadron commander, Alaska Army National Guard. "His warrior spirit and Soldier skills go far."

Gilbert chose Kelly out of approximately 80 Alaska National Guardsmen participating in KQ12 based on his warrior spirit, selfless service and dedication to duty.

"I've been impressed with Spc. Kelly from the first day I met him," Gilbert said.

Kelly said he never thought he would meet McHugh, much less while participate in Khaan Quest.

"Today I got to the meet the Secretary of the Army, the Honorable John M. McHugh," Kelly said. "It was an amazing experience, and I enjoyed speaking with someone I respect who was so personable and able to carry on a relaxed conversation."

Kelly was the Honor Graduate of his advanced individual training class at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, in 2011, and graduated from Airborne school in November 2011.

Kelly is a 2003 graduate from Ben Eielson High School at Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska. Since 2007, Kelly has worked as a line clearance tree trimmer with Carlos Tree Service in Anchorage. He is an on-call emergency medical technician for the Anchorage Safety Patrol. He is also a student at University of Alaska Anchorage.

###

#### **Cutlines:**

##### **120815-Z-MZ867-038**

Secretary of the Army John M. McHugh speaks with Alaska Army National Guard Spc. Joseph P. Kelly II, 1-297th Reconnaissance and Surveillance Squadron medic, during an informal meeting Aug. 15 while observing Khaan Quest 12 held at the Mongolian Armed Forces Peace Support Center in the vicinity of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. Khaan Quest is a regularly scheduled multinational exercise sponsored by U.S. Army Pacific and hosted annually by the Mongolian Armed Forces. Kelly is a 2003 graduate from Ben Eielson High School at Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska. Photo: Sgt. Michelle Brown, 134th Public Affairs Detachment, Alaska Army National Guard

##### **120815-Z-MZ867-028**

Alaska Army National Guard Spc. Joseph P. Kelly II, 1-297th Reconnaissance and Surveillance Squadron medic, waits for the opportunity to meet Secretary of the Army John M. McHugh during a visit Aug. 15 to observe Khaan Quest 2012 held at the Mongolian Armed Forces Peace Support Center in the vicinity of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. Khaan Quest is a regularly scheduled multinational exercise sponsored by U.S. Army Pacific and hosted annually by the Mongolian Armed Forces. Kelly is a 2003 graduate from Ben Eielson High School at Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska. Photo: Sgt. Michelle Brown, 134th Public Affairs Detachment, Alaska Army National Guard

##### **120317-Z-MZ867-012**

Alaska Army National Guard Spc. Joseph P. Kelly II, 1-297th Reconnaissance and Surveillance Squadron medic, completes the written essay portion of the Best Warrior Competition on Camp Denali March 17. The competitors had to complete a written essay on what they believe is the meaning of leadership. Kelly is a 2003 graduate from Ben Eielson High School at Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska. Photo: Sgt. Michelle Brown, 134th Public Affairs Detachment, Alaska Army National Guard

### **Kelly**

Secretary of the Army John M. McHugh and Spc. Joseph P. Kelly II, a medic with 1-297th Reconnaissance and Surveillance Squadron, Alaska Army National Guard, share a light moment Aug. 15 during McHugh's visit to exercise Khaan Quest 12, a regularly scheduled, multinational exercise in its 10th year. Kelly won the Alaska National Guard's Best Warrior Competition. He is a 2003 graduate from Ben Eielson High School at Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska. Photo: Spc. John G Martinez, U.S. Army